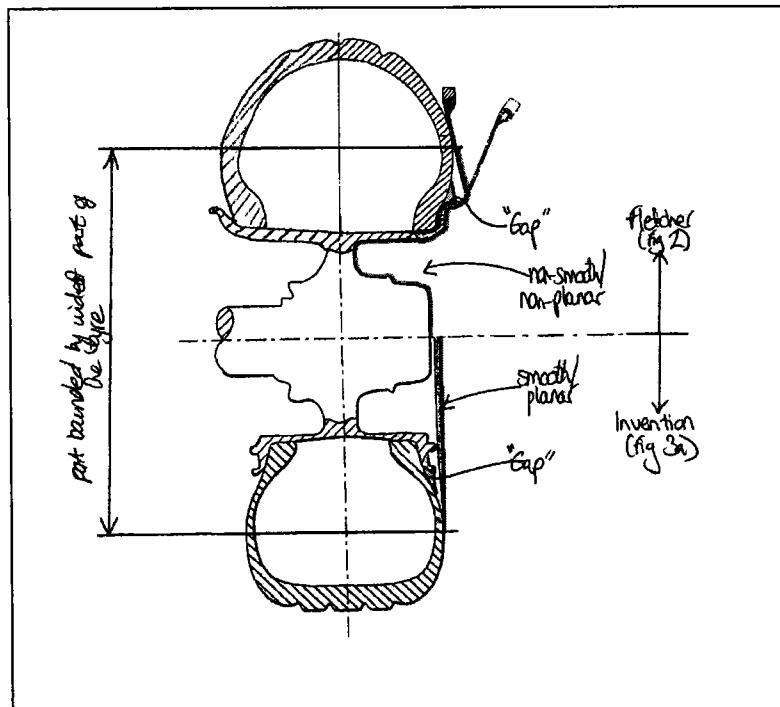


REMARKS

Claims 15-18, 20, 23, 27-29, 33 and 34 are pending. By this Amendment, claims 15 and 28 are amended and new claim 35 is added. No new matter is added. Support for the amendments and the new claims are found at least at page 8, line 33 to page 9, line 13.

35 USC §102 Rejection

Claim 28 is rejected as anticipated by Fletcher. Applicants have amended claim 28 to overcome the rejection. Specifically, the claims now include a limitation that the surface of the wheel/tire assembly presented to the airflow is substantially smooth in shape. As illustrated in the comparison below, the present invention unlike Fletcher includes a smooth/planar interface.



Fletcher discloses a water reflecting annuli around the tire. Figure 2 shows the only embodiment where the annuli arguably is a separate part that closes the gap. However, it is clear that when

deployed or stowed the annuli, in fact, acts to increase the non-smooth and non-planar nature of the surface profile. [See Col. 3; lines 49-72] In fact, it is difficult to see how the annuli could be shaped in order to give the required smooth surface, whilst still providing the water-deflecting feature that it is designed to. Applicants respectfully request removal of the rejection.

35 USC §103 Rejection

Claims 15-18, 20, 23, 27-29, 33 and 34 are rejected as obvious over Large et al. in view of Roth. Applicants respectfully traverse in view of the amendments to independent claims 15 and 28. None of the other prior art documents disclose a smooth and planar surface of the wheel/tire assembly within the part bounded by the widest part of the tire. For example, in Roth (see Figure 2 and page 1, line 92 to page 2, line 7), the relevant surface is the outer surface of metallic disc 26. Here it can be seen that this disc has a central portion of frusto-conical shape 28 with a central opening 29 to receive the wheel hub. Hence, clearly, the surface is not smooth or planar as it has significant “step” portions at 28 and the central opening 29. Likewise, as admitted by the Examiner, Large fails to teach a separate part that is provided between the junction between the tire and the rim. Large does not show a smooth/planar surface in the required region, as can be seen in the Figures. In particular, the central portion of the wheels is stepped. Applicants further note that Large does not contain any written description of a wheel/tire assembly gap beyond calling out “wheels 36.” Based on the amendments and arguments above, Applicants respectfully request removal of the stated obviousness rejections for claims 15-18, 20, 23, 27-29, 33 and 34.

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In view of the foregoing, it is submitted that this application is in condition for allowance.
Favorable consideration and prompt allowance of the application are respectfully requested.

The Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned if the Examiner believes it would
be useful to advance prosecution.

Respectfully submitted,



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